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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 304th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 4 October 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Developments in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly, contained in document A/AC.183/2007/CRP.2

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that, since its previous meeting on 17 September 2007, the Bureau of the Committee had issued a statement on Israel's decision to declare the Gaza Strip "hostile territory", considering that decision to be a violation of international law and yet another form of collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

3. On 23 September 2007, the Quartet principals had issued a statement of strong support for the bilateral talks between the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President, underscoring the need for both parties to take immediate steps to meet commitments and expressing support for the international meeting planned for November. The representative of the Quartet would work closely with the Palestinian Authority to develop a multi-year agenda for institutional and economic development. Conditions in the Gaza Strip gave cause for concern and it was important that emergency and humanitarian assistance should continue without obstruction.

4. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee had met on 24 September 2007 to discuss the technical and financial support which the international community could provide to support the current peace efforts.

5. A meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President on 3 October 2007 had marked the beginning of work by both sides on a joint document to be presented at the international meeting planned for November 2007.

Developments in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem

6. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) informed the Committee that, although the political events in New York during the previous week, in addition to the Israeli-Palestinian bilateral meetings, had led to a situation of cautious optimism, nothing had changed in any significant way on the ground to improve the situation of the Palestinian people. In the West Bank, the number of checkpoints had increased. Although 86 Palestinian prisoners had been released recently, 11,000 remained in Israeli prisons. The humanitarian situation in Gaza was critical. The illegal decision of the Israeli Government to declare Gaza a "hostile territory" constituted a breach of its commitments under the Geneva Conventions and a collective punishment that required all, including the high contracting parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to do everything to stop Israel from implementing its decision.

7. While many issues related to the planned international meeting in November 2007 still remained unclear, some light had been thrown on the situation by numerous high-level meetings held in New York over the previous week. The meeting would be held outside Washington, D.C., and a provisional date of 15 November had been announced. Participants would include Palestine, Israel, the Arab League follow-up committee, which was composed of 12 Arab countries including the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. In addition, some 30 countries from all over the world would be invited, including the Group of Eight and the Quartet, the five permanent Members of the Security Council, and certain major Islamic countries.

8. The September declaration by the Quartet indicating that the meeting would be serious and substantive was welcome. To that end, a document was being drafted by the Palestinian President and the Israeli Prime Minister to frame discussions on the six final status issues, namely, Jerusalem, borders, refugees, settlements, water and security. Prior to the meeting, efforts would be made to reach consensus on the content of that document, which would constitute the blueprint for resolution of those six issues.

9. Accordingly, he hoped that all those involved would produce a useful and clear document which the international meeting could endorse and on the basis of which both sides could negotiate the details of a peace treaty within an agreed time frame, perhaps six months from the end of the meeting. The Palestinians were working hard to accomplish that objective, with the help of all parties interested in reaching a just conclusion to the conflict and witnessing the birth of a Palestinian State neighbouring Israel on the land occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with an agreed and just solution to the refugee question on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The task was huge and failure was not an option.

10. **The Chairman** said that a decisive phase was now being entered in the process of seeking a solution

to the situation of the Palestinian people and that optimism, vigilance and persistence were required to bring it to a successful conclusion.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly, contained in document A/AC.183/2007/CRP.2

11. **Mr. Borg** (Malta), Rapporteur, introduced the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly, contained in document A/AC.183/2007/CRP.2. In accordance with established practice, the Secretariat would continue to update the draft report, in consultation with the Rapporteur and as necessary, in order to reflect any new developments which might take place before it was forwarded to the General Assembly.

12. **The Chairman** said that the report, which was the fruit of lengthy meetings and exchanges of views, had been extremely carefully worded to reflect facts on the ground. He suggested that it should be considered chapter by chapter.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairman** invited delegations to make general comments on the report.

15. **Mr. Malmierca Díaz** (Cuba), urging the Committee to adopt the report, which provided an extensive and detailed account of events during the period under review, said that over that period the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had continued to deteriorate. Israel had tightened its occupation policy by closing the main crossings and continuing to build illegal settlements in the West Bank, thereby causing the Palestinian people further suffering and deprivation. His Government shared the Committee's deep concern about Israel's pursuit of the unlawful construction of the separation wall in the West Bank in contravention of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and various United Nations resolutions.

16. Unfortunately events in the Gaza Strip in June had had a negative impact on the manifold efforts of Palestinian political organizations and groups to achieve national unity and on the National Unity Government which had been formed in March 2007 in the wake of the Mecca Agreement. In the current circumstances priority should therefore be given to renewing the Palestinian dialogue with a view to securing national reconciliation. As the Non-Aligned Movement had indicated in its statement of 14 July, it was vital that the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians united in support of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, his Government and all democratically elected Palestinian institutions and that they resolved their political differences by peaceful means.

17. The Palestinian people was not alone; it could count on the solidarity of the international community. At a meeting in late 2006, the foreign ministers of the Committee on Palestine of the Non-Aligned Movement, under the chairmanship of Cuba, had reiterated the Movement's unwavering commitment to the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights.

18. Lastly, he reaffirmed his Government's unflagging support for efforts to revive the peace process which should lead to a fair and lasting solution enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights to self-determination and to a sovereign independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem.

19. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine), recalling the address of the President of the Palestinian Authority to the General Assembly on 21 September and the references that he had made to the tragic developments in the Gaza Strip since the June coup d'état by the illegal militias of Hamas, said that the situation in the Gaza Strip must return to that prevailing before the coup d'état in order to allow the resumption of dialogue and efforts by the various political groups to bring about reconciliation and national unity.

20. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to adopt the draft report chapter by chapter.

21. *Chapters I-VII were adopted.*

22. *The draft report, as a whole, was adopted.*

Other matters

23. **The Chairman** welcomed Ms. Rana Abu Sibaa, a member of staff of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who would be familiarizing herself with the work of the United Nations and the Secretariat in the Division for Palestinian Rights as part of the Committee's 2007 training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority. A second trainee had been unable

to leave the Gaza Strip owing to the closures in operation there. It was to be hoped that he would soon be able to travel to New York to take up his placement. To date 23 Palestinian Authority officers had taken part in the programme, which was in its twelfth year.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.